

Statement for the Record – 26 February 2004
Congressman Mark E. Souder

Mr. Speaker –

I rise today with a heavy heart to mourn the untimely death of President Boris Trajkovski of the Republic of Macedonia. As many of my colleagues have heard, President Trajkovski was killed this morning in a plane crash while traveling to Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Trajkovski was born in Strumica, Macedonia on June 25, 1956. He graduated with a degree in law from the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in 1980. He was an ordained Methodist minister and President of the Church Council of the United Methodist Church.

In 1998, he was appointed to the post of Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs. During his time as Deputy-Minister, he predicted the rise of ethnic tensions in Macedonia due to the crisis in Kosovo. He was right to criticize NATO's lack of help in that crisis. During much of the fighting in the Balkans, Macedonia allowed NATO to use Macedonian territory. During Macedonia's ethnic crisis, NATO was sorely lacking in assistance

In 1999 he was inaugurated as President of the Republic of Macedonia. During his term as president, he faced near-civil war in his country. Ethnic divisions threatened to tear his country apart. President Trajkovski, however, worked with all ethnic groups to forge a solution. Despite criticism that he was too lenient on minority groups, he pressed for peace and facilitated a peace deal that helped to avoid the fate of other former of the Yugoslav republics.

In addition to forging peace in his country, Mr. Trajkovski worked to improve Macedonia's standing on the world stage. Under his leadership, Macedonia was one of the first countries to publicly support Operation Iraqi Freedom and to commit troops to the effort. Mr. Trajkovski was a tireless advocate for religious tolerance, religious freedom, and conflict resolution.

Mr. Trajkovski's work also focused on improving the lives of all Macedonians. A strong believer in free markets and the importance of international economic co-operation, Mr. Trajkovski died while on his way

to an international investors meeting that would undoubtedly have helped the development and future prosperity of Macedonia.

The death of President Trajkovski is a tragedy. Macedonia has lost a true leader. The international community has lost a strong voice for peace and co-operation. On the passing of President Trajkovski, Kerri Houston, Vice President of Policy for Frontiers of Freedom noted, "President Trajkovski was a courageous leader who sought security, economic progress, and a common national identity for the Macedonian people." A truer statement was never uttered.

Mr. Trajkovski leaves behind a wife, Vilma, and two children Sara and Stefan. I offer my sympathies to his family and the families of the other victims of this terrible accident.